



AMERICAN BREWERY | REVITALIZED TO INSPIRE HOPE



"It was known as the spooky building on the hill. But now it's a local landmark, and a place for people who are really trying to make a difference in the neighborhood."

-Anath Ranon, Cho Benn Holbak + Associates



For many outside Maryland, the only view of East Baltimore is the one shown on the HBO® series The Wire: desolate, poverty-stricken, crime-ridden. At the heart of the neighborhood the American Brewery building towered overhead, its ornate windows and unique architecture fallen into disrepair. "It was a mess," commented Anath Ranon of Cho Benn Holback + Associates, the architects charged with restoring the structure. "The building had stood empty for over 30 years, with vagrants and pigeons living inside off and on."

But locals still saw potential in the three pagoda-like towers, originally erected in 1887 by German immigrant and brewer John Frederick Wiessner. Humanim, a non-profit organization providing human services throughout Maryland-including the challenged community surrounding the American Brewery building—realized that the abandoned landmark provided an opportunity to create a catalyst for revitalizing the neighborhood So designers, aided by national historians, local advocates, and Marvin Signature Products and Services, went to work.

An integral part of the building's appeal lay in its windows. "Although many openings had been bricked in or covered over," commented Ranon, "there were two remaining partial windows as well as historic photos to use as a reference." Meticulous research went into making sure that replacement windows would be as close to the originals as possible, with the partial windows used for muntin sizing and design inspiration.

All existing openings were to be filled as-is, so every window had to be built to accommodate the shifting of a 120+ year-old building. Fortunately, the Marvin Signature team could adapt to the subtle differences in each opening. More energy efficient than the original windows, all new units were made with insulating glass with simulated divided lites, plus carefully matched extruded aluminum cladding to recreate the original wood exteriors.

"We found two types of frames, some with a heavy wood bullnose profile, and others with a beaded profile," recalled Ranon. "Marvin was able to create extruded clad profiles to match them both." Where original, high-quality frames had survived the years of neglect, Marvin developed sash replacements. The renovation was completed in 2009, revealing magnificent details and enduring craftsmanship that had survived under the decay, resulting in inspired, forward-thinking surroundings for Humanim to carry on their important work.

## **PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The American Brewery Building, on the National Register of Historic Places, was recently honored as the 2009 Public Building of the Year by the Maryland Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.
- Original openings ranged from salvageable oversized double-hung windows, deteriorated sash in intact framing, and openings that needed complete replacement units. Through careful matching of the existing casing and frame component, Marvin replicated fenestration details to maintain the defining characteristics of the historic façade.
- A specialized bead casing in oversized arch-top windows also required precise matching. Marvin was the only window manufacturer to produce the casing in a single piece to fit within the allotted openings.
- On-time delivery was critical in order to meet grant and tax incentives that funded the extensive \$21.2 million renovation.
- The pagoda-style towers, which once concealed the brewery's grain elevators, serve as key local landmarks and have been rebuilt to their former structure and form.

## **SPECS**

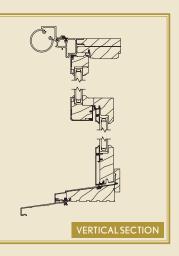
Building Type: 60,000-square-foot abandoned brewery converted to office space

Units and Applications: At least 20 different shapes of Magnum Double Hungs and Round Top windows plus special casings, mouldings and lite patterns. Impact glass was used in first floor windows.

Owner: Humanim

Architect: Cho Benn Holback + Associates

Contractor: Struever Bros. Eccles & Rouse



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